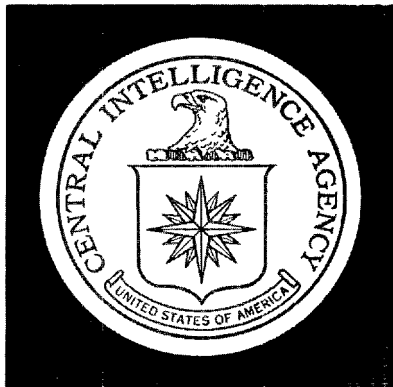


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

OSD review completed

NSA review completed

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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

In South Vietnam, Viet Cong terrorists attacked two major installations in the Saigon area. In the North, MIGs were active on both December 3 and 4 in challenging US air strikes.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Viet Cong terrorists attack Tan Son Nhut Air Base and a US military barracks in Saigon (Paras. 1-3).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The Constituent Assembly is considering the future government (Paras. 1-7). The likelihood of Bui Diem being appointed ambassador to the United States has increased (Para. 8).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
North Vietnamese MIGs repeatedly challenged US aircraft on both December 3 and 4 (Paras. 1-4).

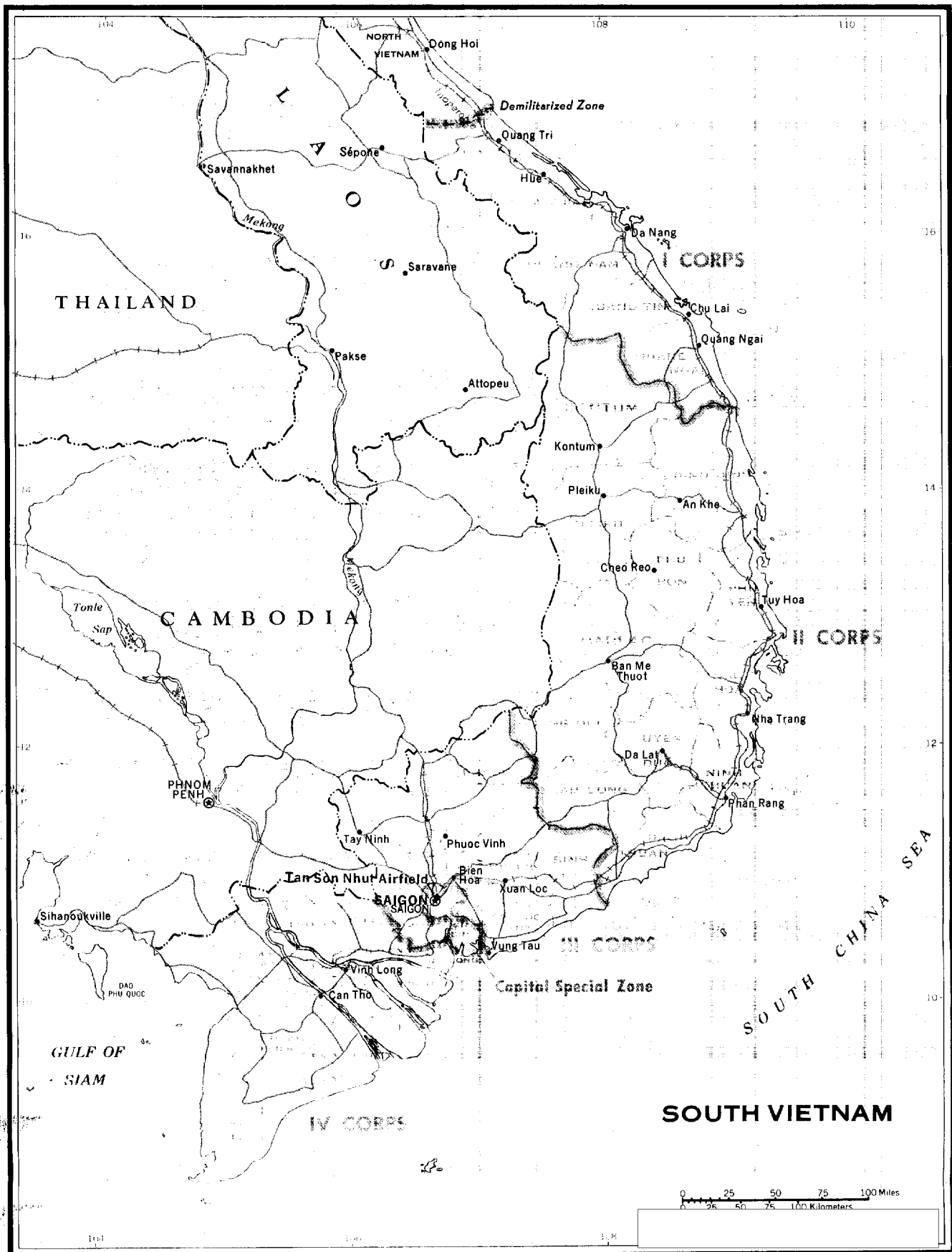
IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: DRV propaganda continues to protest 2 December bombings of Hanoi area (Paras. 1-3).

VI. Other Major Aspects: Communists have opened Route 911 in Laos as far south as the DMZ (Paras. 1-2).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Viet Cong terrorists made two major attacks in the Saigon area on 4 December, killing three US military personnel and causing considerable damage. Their targets were the Tan Son Nhut Air Base on the northwestern edge of the capital and a building occupied by the US Army Psychological Operations Group in downtown Saigon. Eighteen Viet Cong were killed and six captured in the attack on Tan Son Nhut.

2. The Army Psychological Operations Group facility was gutted by the explosion and fire from a 20-pound charge placed under the building's metal roof. Nine US military personnel were wounded but none are now in serious condition. Windows were broken in the adjacent US A.I.D. building but no one was injured. The terrorist who placed the bomb has not been apprehended.

3. The attack on the Tan Son Nhut Air Base was a carefully coordinated operation, probably carried out by a 30-man infiltration team. The raid began with a mortar attack, and fire fights soon developed as US Air Police and sentry dogs confronted the infiltrators. The Viet Cong succeeded in hitting ten US aircraft but most of the damage was superficial.

4. No significant results were reported in the 13 of 23 ground operations in which US forces are participating in the country. In I and II Corps bad weather impeded both ground and air activity.

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Ambassadorial Changes

8. Prime Minister Ky has requested in writing that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs replace Vu Van Thai, the ambassador to the United States, with one of Ky's personal assistants, Bui Diem, according to the latter's conversation with the US Embassy political counselor. Ambassador Thai is now in Saigon.

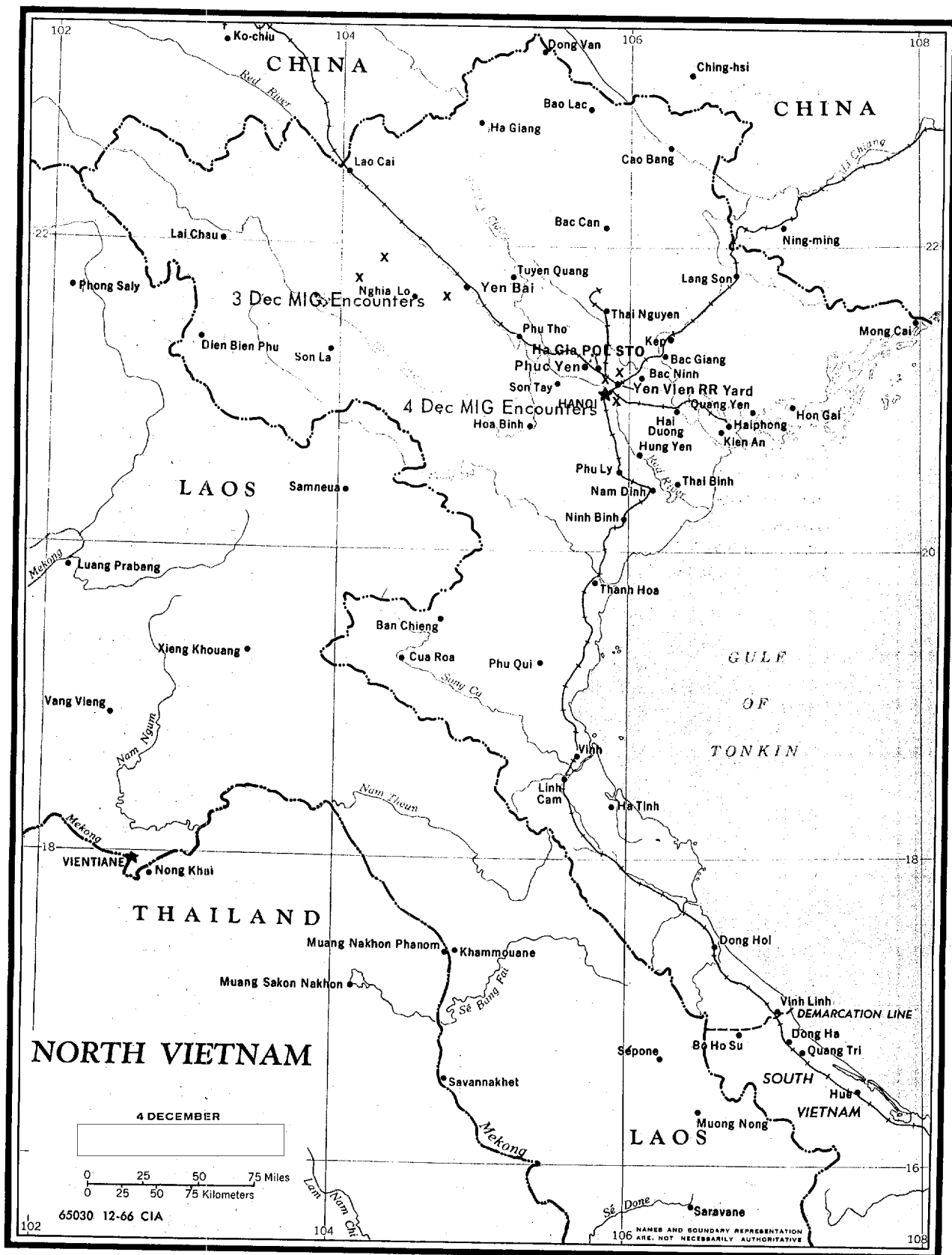
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[redacted] the ruling military generals have been pressuring the Foreign Affairs Ministry for the assignment to ambassadorial posts of candidates whom they favor. Tran Van Do, the ministry head, has registered several complaints to Ky alleging military interference in his ministry. Bui Diem, one of the primary subjects of criticism from dissident southern ministers during the recent cabinet crisis, has [redacted] been slated as ambassador to either the US or Japan, probably at his own request. However, the change is not yet final. Diem has reported imminent personnel shifts before that have been altered at the last minute.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. North Vietnamese MIG interceptors repeatedly challenged US aircraft which were attempting to strike targets in the Hanoi area despite poor flying weather on 3 and 4 December. No US plane losses were noted in the weekend's six air encounters, but initial reports indicate that at least two MIG-17s may have been shot down.

2. On 3 December three separate flights of F-105s encountered MIG-17s and MIG-21s while en route to the Yen Vien railroad yards five miles northeast of Hanoi. The encounters all occurred far from the DRV capital in the vicinity of Yen Bai. No firing was initiated by either side and weather conditions prevented the US planes from reaching their target.

3. On 4 December additional groups of F-105s, attempting to get through to Yen Vien and the Ha Gia POL facility 14 miles north of Hanoi, were engaged by three groups of MIG-17s. In the first encounter eight Communist fighters were sighted by US pilots near Ha Gia. At least two of the MIGs launched air-to-air missiles in the ensuing battle, but no planes were lost by either side. Moments later, four other MIG-17s attacked a flight of four more F-105s in the same area and 20-mm. fire from one of the US fighter-bombers is believed to have downed a MIG. Shortly thereafter a third engagement occurred when four MIG-17s engaged four F-105s trying to get through to the Yen Vien railroad yard. One of the DRV interceptors was destroyed by US cannon fire.

4. The high level of activity on the part of North Vietnam's MIGs this weekend is noteworthy in view of their relatively ineffective performance on 2 December. The loss of seven US planes on that occasion was as severe as on any previous day in the air war; however, none can be attributed to the DRV fighter force. SIGINT reports indicate that the MIGs may have been unable to get adequate intercept information due to the saturation of DRV radar facilities, as more than 200 US aircraft attacked the Hanoi area in a short time period. North Vietnam's SAM units

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also may have been forced to fire independently due to the overload on the air defense control centers. These units did launch an estimated 75 missiles, however, on 2 December, bringing down at least four US aircraft. If weather permits US planes to reach additional programmed targets in the Hanoi area this week, they may encounter a determined defense on the part of the Communist fighters.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Hanoi's propaganda protest against the 2 December bombings in the Hanoi area continued throughout the weekend. The protests included not only the usual ICC and Foreign Ministry statements but also a mass rally in the capital city to celebrate the victory and western style "press conferences" designed to catch headlines throughout the world. At one press conference, the regime displayed an American airman shot down north of Hanoi during these raids, and in another made arrangements for foreign correspondents to visit the actual bomb damage to the truck park at Van Dien some three hours after the raids.

2. The Foreign Ministry statement was largely routine, claiming that the strikes were a new, extremely serious escalation in which US planes bombed "the southern outskirts of Hanoi city and two other populated areas inside the city." No specific retaliatory action was threatened. The statement called for international condemnation of the bombings and for increased expressions of "militant solidarity with the Vietnamese people." It also included an expression of Vietnamese determination to fight until final victory no matter what escalation measures the US might introduce.

3. The foreign press coverage based on eyewitness accounts, however, was probably more effective than the regime's own more obvious propaganda releases in putting the Vietnamese story across to foreign audiences.

[REDACTED] All filed stories minimizing the extent of the bomb damage and portraying the Vietnamese reaction as valiant, quick, and efficient. The AFP release described the rapid mobilization of manpower repair crews already at work reinstalling telephone service and 500 feet of track on the railroad leading south from Hanoi. Vietnamese officials were quoted as claiming that telephone communications had already been restored and

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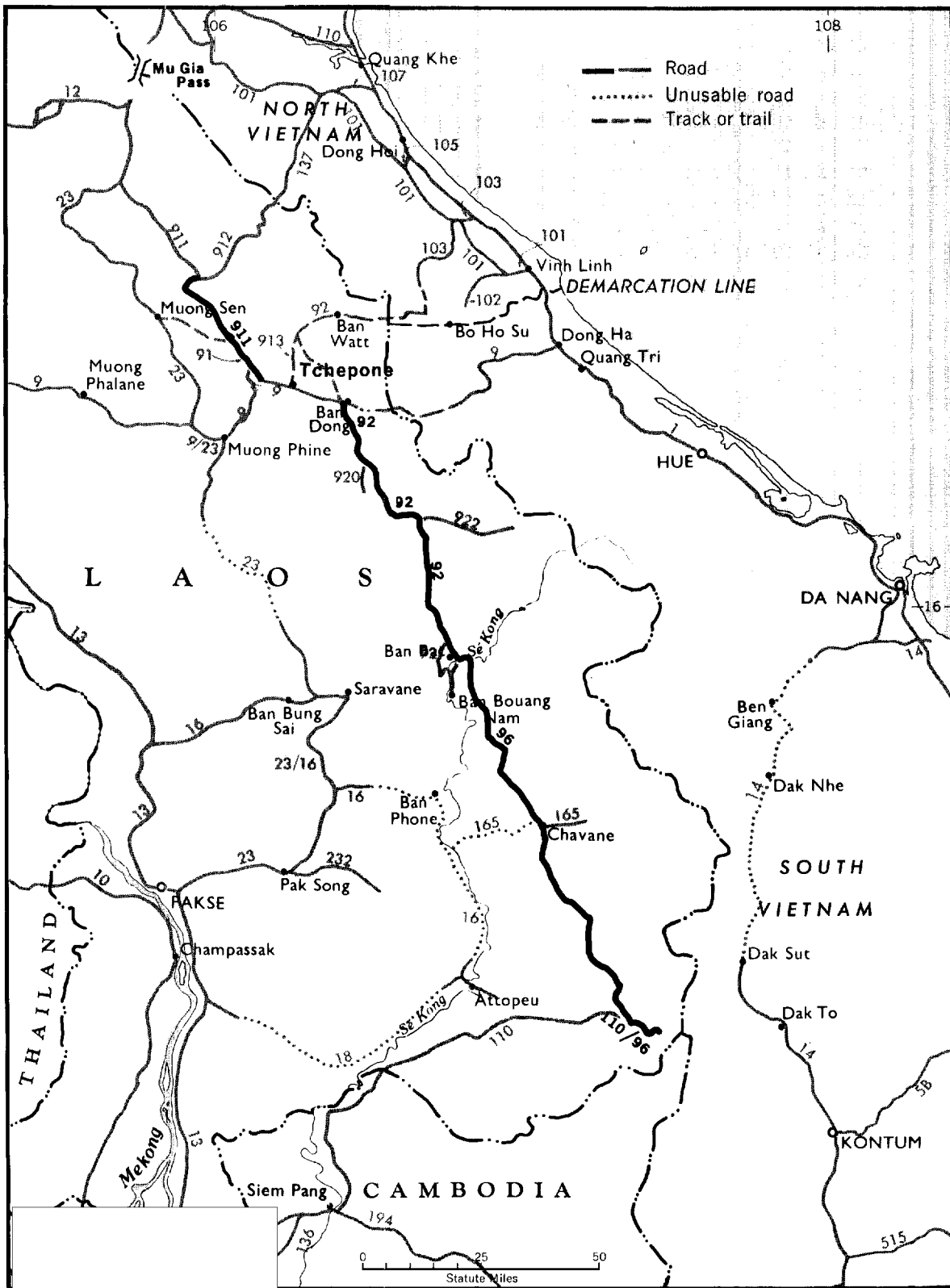
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the train would be running south by the following Saturday morning. The population of a small rural village on the outskirts of Van Dien was described as reassembled and organized in a search party seeking out delayed action bombs. One regime spokesman claimed that 26 persons (presumably civilian) had been killed in the raids. There were no estimates given of damage to the militarily significant transportation facilities in the truck park.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. The Communists have opened a major supply artery in the northern section of the Laotian Panhandle. Aerial photography of 10 November indicates Route 911 is now open from its junction with Route 912 to Tchepone. Communist repair activities, however, have thus far extended the North Vietnamese trucking capability in Laos only as far south as the Vietnamese DMZ. Laotian routes below the DMZ such as 92, 96, and, in the south, 110, remain interdicted and closed to through truck traffic.

2. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
substantial numbers of trucks are entering Laos from North Vietnam through the Mu Gia Pass. Approximately 150 trucks moved through the pass during the week of 18 November, a reduction from the levels reached during the first half of the month. Reports indicate that these trucks are not moving very far south of the pass. It appears likely that the Communists are presently stockpiling equipment and supplies in the Mu Gia area, in preparation for farther southbound movement in the future.

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